

AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION IN 2003

Birthdays can take on different meanings as people grow older. To a young person, a birthday might mean an opportunity to get a driver's license or to vote for the first time. To an older person, it might mean a retirement party. Many health issues, including everything from childhood diseases to geriatric conditions, are associated with age. These and many other life experiences are somewhat different for the male population than for the female population. The U.S. Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program produces age and sex data for the United States, states, and counties.

Words That Count

An **age pyramid** is a horizontal bar graph, usually showing the size of the male population on the left and the female population on the right, with age groupings beginning with the youngest populations on the bottom and ending with the oldest ones at the top (Figure 1).

Median age is the age at which half the population is older and half is younger.

A **cohort** is a group of people born during the same time period.

The **Baby Boom Generation** is the large cohort of people born from 1946 to 1964.

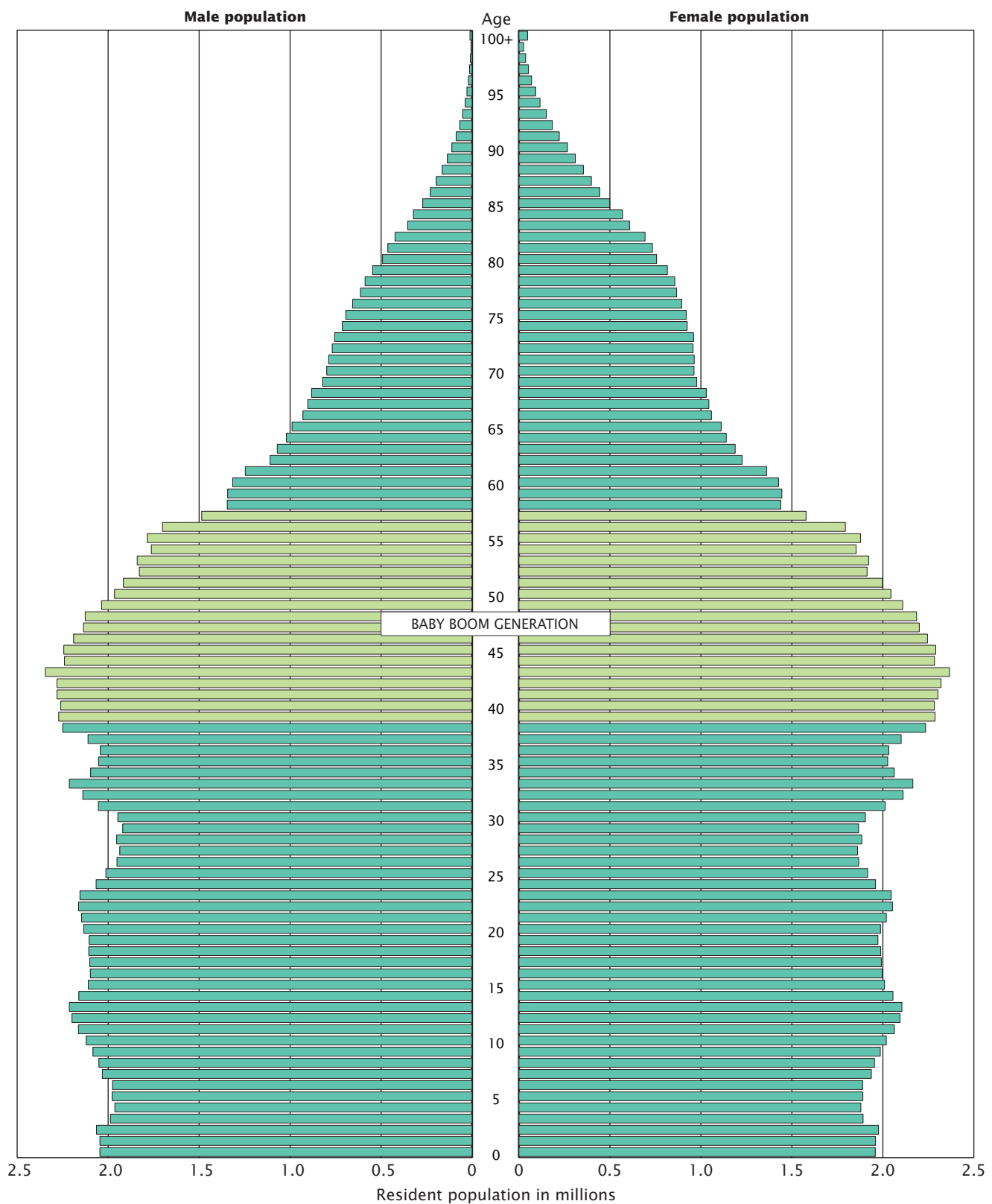
Men and Women

Within the total resident population in 2003 (290.1 million), women and girls outnumbered men and boys by 4.7 million—147.8 million compared with 143.0 million. This difference was not spread evenly throughout the age groups, as illustrated in the age pyramid shown in Figure 1. Among those under 18, boys outnumbered girls in 2003. From about 40 on, women were the majority. Among people in their nineties, the ratio of men to women was 36 to 100, reflecting the longer life expectancy of women than men.¹ The pyramid bulges in the middle, indicating the large cohort known as the Baby Boom Generation, who were 39 to 57 in 2003. Other irregularities in the pyramid frequently reflect years with relatively high or low birth rates.

¹ The number of male residents per 100 female residents is called a sex ratio. To find out more about sex ratios, see chapters on men and women and older adults.

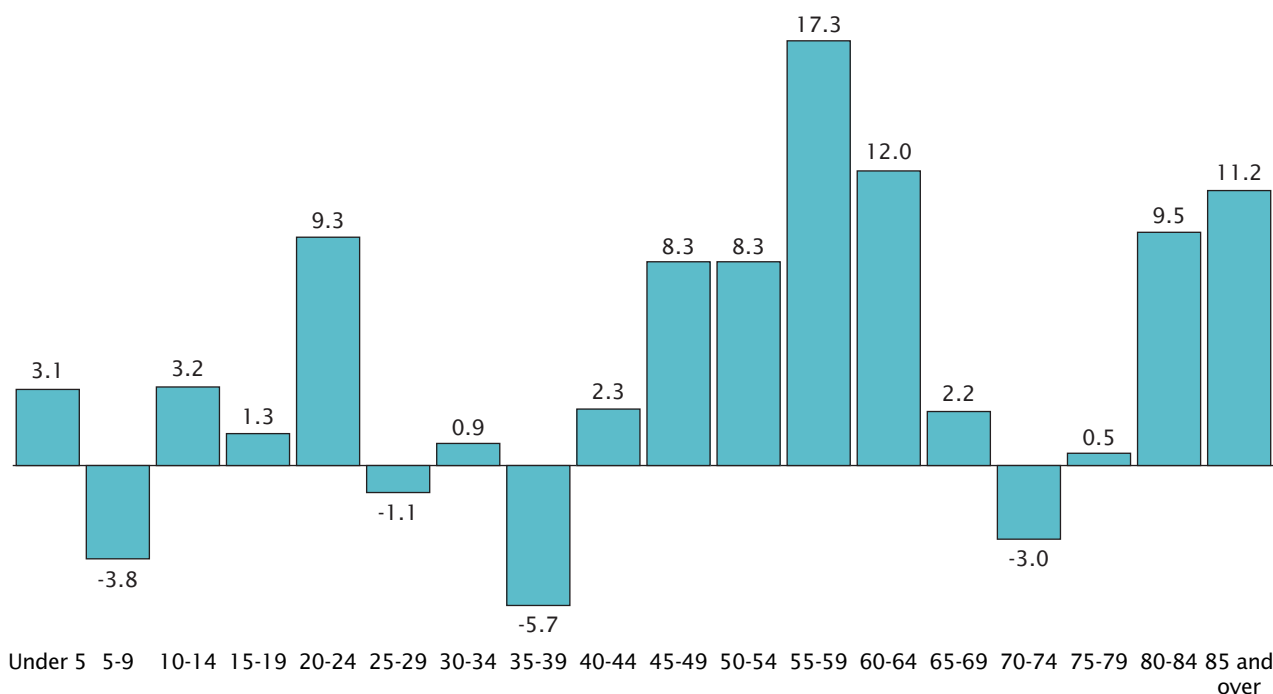
Figure 1.

Population by Single Year of Age and Sex: 2003



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program, July 1, 2003.

Figure 2.
Percent Change in Population by Age: 2000 to 2003



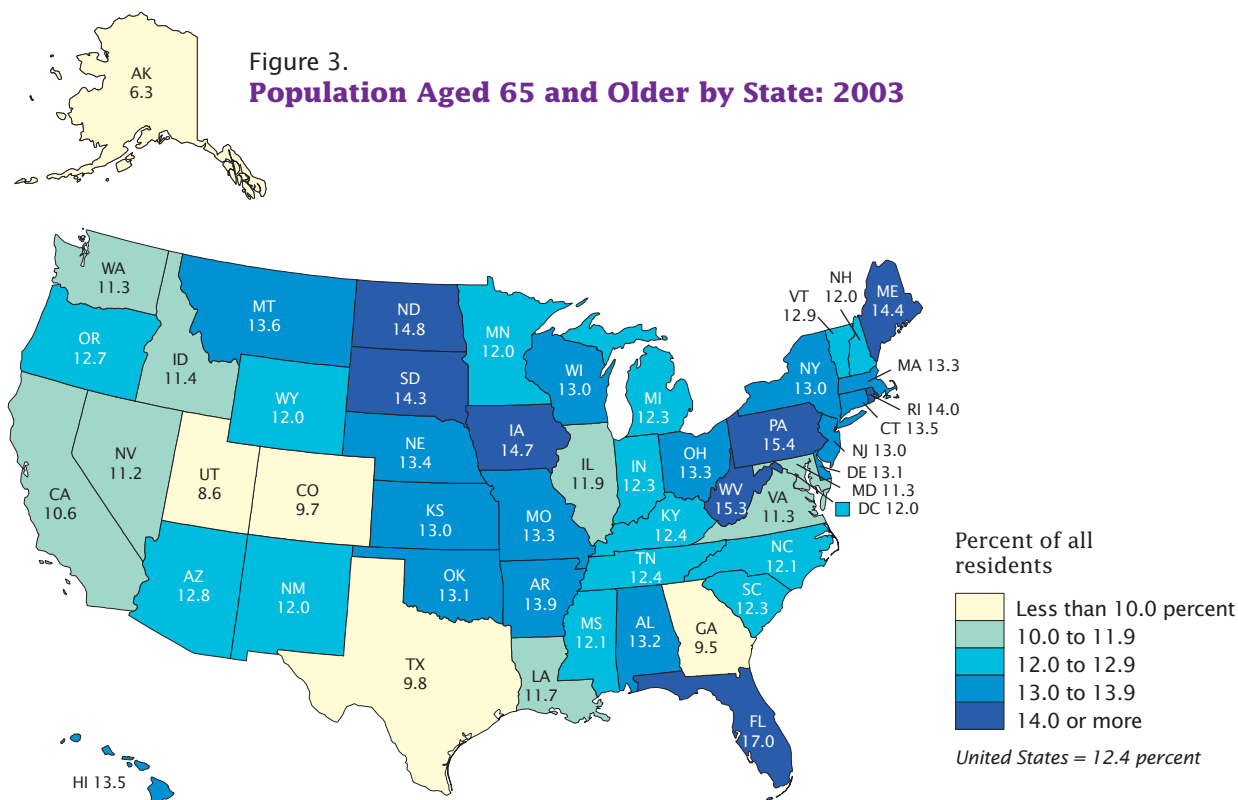
Age Groups

Between Census Day (April 1, 2000) and July 1, 2003, the population of most 5-year age groups grew. A few groups saw declines, as illustrated in Figure 2.

The largest decline (5.7 percent) was among the population aged 35 to 39, the age group that the Baby Boom Generation was leaving. The fastest-growing population under 85 was the population 55 to 59. This age group grew more than 17 percent because the oldest Baby Boomers were replacing the smaller cohort of people who were born in the 5-year period before them.

While the total population increased 3.3 percent between 2000 and 2003, the population 65 and older increased 2.6 percent. A “birth dearth” during the late 1920s and early 1930s was largely responsible for the slow growth of this group. The population 70 to 74 shrank 3.0 percent, reflecting the entry into this age group of the small birth cohorts of the early 1930s. Other 5-year age groups within this older age group saw increases. The population 85 and older grew by 11 percent.

On July 1, 2003, the median age of the population was 35.9 years—older than the highest median age ever recorded in a census (35.3 in Census 2000).



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program, July 1, 2003.

State Differences

While 12 percent of U.S. residents were 65 or older in 2003, the proportions in individual states differed. Florida had the highest proportion in this age range, 17 percent (Figure 3). West Virginia and Pennsylvania followed, with proportions above 15 percent. Alaska anchored the other end of the scale, with 6 percent of its population in this age range. The proportion of the population that was 65 and older was also below 10 percent in Utah, Georgia, Colorado, and Texas.

The Census Bureau Can Tell You More

For more detailed information, go to the U.S. Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program Web site <www.census.gov/popest/estimates.php>.

Look for information on related topics on the Census Bureau's Web site <www.census.gov>.

Contact the Census Bureau's Customer Service Center at 301-763-INFO (4636) or e-mail <pop@census.gov>.